



State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Administrative Policies and Procedures: 7.14

Subject: Electronic Mail (E-Mail) Disposition

Supersedes: DCS 7.14, 01/01/04

Local Policy: No
Local Procedures: No
Training Required: No
Applicable Practice Model Standard(s):

Approved by:

Effective date: 08/01/01

Revision date: 04/01/05

Application

To Department of Children's Services (DCS) Employees, Community Services Agencies (CSA), and Contract Services personnel whose access to or use of electronic mail services are funded by the State of Tennessee or is available through equipment owned or leased by the State of Tennessee.

Authority:

TCA 10-7-121, 10-7-301(2), 10-7-301(6), 10-7-501, 10-7-504, 10-7-509, 10-7-512, and 33-3-102, 36-1-125, 37-1-126, 37-1-409, 37-2-415, 37-1-612, 37-2-408, 37-5-106 and 37-5-107

Policy

E-mail created and received as official business and retained as evidence of official transactions, policies, actions, or decisions are state records that will be identified, managed, retained and deleted according to retention guidelines as prescribed by an established record disposition authorization (RDA).

Procedures

A. Ownership

Electronic mail service is a tool used to facilitate internal and external communications. All messages transmitted via the State of Tennessee E-mail/Internet system are the State's property and shall not be considered personal and private and may be accessed by DCS management and technical staff.

B. Automatic purging

Most e-mail may be considered a non-record correspondence of short-term duration. All e-mail in the main GroupWise account and its folder, including the Cabinet and its subfolders, will be automatically purged according to rule-driven dates.

C. Automatic purge dates

1. The following statewide automatic deletion rules will apply for all e-mail messages in the main GroupWise account and its folder, including the cabinet and its subfolders:
 - a) The maximum retention period for MAIL, SENT ITEMS, and PHONE items is 180 days.
 - b) The maximum retention period for APPOINTMENTS, TASKS, and NOTES items is 250 days.
 - c) The maximum retention period for items in the TRASH folder is 30 days.
2. Staff shall be encouraged to delete messages daily, immediately after reading, replying, or taking other appropriate action before the rule driven dates in order to improve performance and reduce system overload on the e-mail servers.
3. Staff should consult both statewide and agency RDAs for guidance regarding the retention and disposal of e-mail records.

D. Archive

1. An e-mail message, including attachments, which requires retention beyond the scheduled deletion date, may be retained in GroupWise Archive, which is not subject to statewide automatic deletion rules.
2. GroupWise Archive, due to storage limitations, shall not be utilized as an indefinite archival storehouse for non-current communications.
3. Staff is encouraged to selectively archive messages with short-term, transitory value.
4. Staff shall not archive large groups of e-mail that may either consume server disk space or could result in system problems.
5. Staff shall review GroupWise Archive annually and purge unnecessary messages.

E. Identification

1. The disposition of an e-mail message shall be determined by the information it contains or the purpose it serves; therefore, the content must be evaluated to determine

record value, if any, and the length of time the message must be retained.

2. E-mail content, including attachments, is considered a record if they meet the criteria established in T.C. A. 10-7-301(6).
3. Staff shall be responsible for identifying e-mail messages they send or receive, on state provided e-mail systems or across the Internet, according to content as to whether or not they qualify as a state record.
4. Staff sending an e-mail has the burden of protecting copyrighted materials since all copyright laws apply equally to e-mail systems.
5. Staff shall take reasonable precautions before transmitting confidential or sensitive information due to potential security problems.
6. E-mail subject headings shall be as descriptive as possible to facilitate the filing of messages.

F. Retention

1. The person responsible for the state record shall determine if the e-mail message, whether internal or external, is a state record and if so, to retain that information in the appropriate media, i.e., paper, microfilm, disk, etc.
2. If the content of an e-mail message has business value and requires retention, the sender or recipient may either save the e-mail as an electronic document or generate a hard copy printout for placement in the proper paper file for further retention according to the approved RDA.
3. If the content of an e-mail message requires continuing retention electronically, the sender or recipient should transfer from the e-mail system to another system or magnetic/electronic media.
4. E-mail records appraised as permanent will be converted to paper, microfilm, or another acceptable medium that meets national standards for permanent retention.
5. Retention periods for some paper-based records covered by statewide and agency RDAs may be applicable to e-mail records.

6. E-mail created or received by DCS employees that resign, transfer, or are terminated will be subject to disposition on a case-by-case basis as determined by DCS Management and Office Of Information Systems staff.

G. Backup

1. E-mail will be backed up to tape on a routine basis for disaster recovery purposes.
2. Backup tapes are recycled annually by calendar year, therefore, the retention period of the e-mail data on these tapes will not exceed a maximum one (1) year retention period.
3. Backup tape requests regarding e-mail shall be referred to DCS Legal and Office of Information Systems for a determination of appropriateness and how best to fulfill the request.

H. Requests for information

1. E-mail that is a state record may be subject to public inspection and may be made available to the public, unless State or Federal law protects the information.
2. E-mail may also be accessed through the discovery process in the event of litigation.
3. Proper identification should be obtained and verified for anyone requesting access to an e-mail message.
4. Contact DCS Legal for assistance regarding requests for the inspection of any e-mail message.

Forms

None

Collateral Documents

[Finance & Administration-OIR Electronic Mail Acceptable Use Policy, Version 1.10
Revised July 2004](#)

[DCS Policy 7.2FA, Electronic Mail Acceptable Use Policy, July 12, 2004](#)

GroupWise Recommended Client Cleanup Options (OIR)

[Statewide Records Disposition Authorizations](#)

[Department of Children's Services Records Disposition Authorizations](#)

Standards

None

Glossary

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<i>Cutoff:</i>	To cutoff records in a file means to break, or end, them at regular intervals to permit their disposal or transfer in complete blocks and, for correspondence files, to permit the establishment of new files. Cutoffs are needed before disposition instructions can be applied because retention periods usually begin with the cutoff, not with the creation or receipt, of the records.
<i>Disposition:</i>	An action taken, such as transferring, purging, destroying, microfilming, archiving, etc., regarding records that have reached the end of their retention period. File disposition normally occurs on the 21 st birthday for a social service child and the 22nd birthday for a juvenile justice child.
<i>Electronic mail (e-mail):</i>	A means of sending and receiving messages using a computer network.
<i>Electronic mail message:</i>	A document created or received via an electronic mail system, including brief notes, formal or substantive narrative documents, and any attachments, such as word processing and other electronic documents, which may be transmitted with the message.
<i>Electronic record:</i>	Information recorded in a form that requires a computer or other machine to process it and that satisfies the legal definition of a record according to Tennessee Code Annotated.
<i>GroupWise:</i>	A store and deliver software system that transports messages from an individual or group of computer users to another.
<i>GroupWise Archive:</i>	A means of removing an important transitory message from the mailbox, that you do not want to save as a file, and placing it in the local archive directory.
<i>Non-record E-mail:</i>	A message created primarily for the communication of information, and which does not set policy, establish guidelines or procedures, certify a transaction, or become a receipt, and has no enduring value.

Records:	All documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, microfilms, electronic data processing files and output, films, sound recordings, or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristic made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any governmental agency.
Permanent Archive Record:	A record having legal, administrative or historical value, which must be retained indefinitely.
Records Disposition Authorization (RDA):	Official document utilized by an agency head to request authority for the disposition of records. The Public Records Commission shall determine and order proper disposition of state records through the approval of the RDA..
Retention period:	Period of time records must be kept according to legal and/or organizational requirements.